



INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

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Strategic Connections resulting in Unique Solutions

Chair's Corner



With the passing of January, tax preparation begins to occupy our thoughts. Our Federal Executive Board has coordinated a partnership with the Internal Revenue

Service to provide the **“MyFreeTaxes” initiative** to benefit our federal employees, contract employees and their family members who made less than \$66,000 in 2017. This partnership provides state and federal tax preparation and filing assistance for qualified individuals. It's easy, safe, secure and no cost those who meet the income limit. An article is provided at page five of this newsletter with more specific info. Additional information is provided on our website with a link providing direct access to the tax preparation resource.

Begin the process at:

<https://www.oklahoma.feb.gov/HoustonMyFreeTaxes.html>

According to the National Safety Council, vehicle collisions are the top cause of work-related death in Texas. To address this

concern, our FEB has partnered with the National Safety Council to provide a “train-the-trainer” driving safety course. Because seats are limited, we are targeting Managers, HR professionals and safety instructors to attend. The intention is for the attendees to return to their agency and teach the course to agency employees in an effort to multiply the effort and increase the number of Federal, State & Local Government employees who are reached with this message. A registration form is provided on page 8 of this newsletter, for your convenience.

Through our FEB/FEMA partnership, we are able to offer the L-548 and L-550 COOP classes in Houston. Watch our newsletter and website for additional information on this class that will be offered in June, 2018!

I look forward to seeing you at our events.

Tim Jeffcoat, Chairman

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Exercise and the Common Cold

If you're looking for a safe way to prevent colds, regular exercise may be the ticket. And you don't have to run a marathon, either. Moderate activity is all you need.

Exercise improves your overall fitness, which can help boost your immune system - the body's defense against infections.

Some studies show that "moderate intensity" exercise may cut down the number of colds you get. That type of activity includes things like a 20- to 30-minute walk every day, going to the gym every other day, or biking with your kids a few times a week.

In one study in the **American Journal of Medicine**, women who walked for a half-hour every day for 1 year had half the number of colds as those who didn't exercise. Researchers found that regular walking may lead to a higher number of white blood cells, which fight infections.

In another study, researchers found that in 65-year-olds who did regular exercise, the number of T-cells -- a specific type of white blood cell -- was as high as those of people in their 30s.

Should You Exercise When You Have a Cold?

It's usually safe to do it as long as you listen to your body. You'll need to watch out for certain risky situations.

Physical activity increases your heart rate, but so can some cold medicines. So a combo of exercise and decongestants can cause your heart to pump very hard. You may become short of breath and have trouble breathing.

If you have asthma and a cold, make sure you talk with your doctor before you exercise. It may cause you to cough and wheeze more and make you short of breath.

When your cold comes with a fever, exercise could stress your body even more. So wait a few days to get back to your regular exercise program.

Also be careful about working out too hard when you have a cold. It can make you feel worse and slow down your recovery.

Too Much Exercise May Increase Colds

It's not a problem for most of us, but if you're an exercise fiend, make sure you take time for rest and recovery after periods of intense training.

Your immune system works best when it isn't stressed. Scientists say athletes who train intensely without building in recovery time are more likely to get colds or flu.

When workouts get too strenuous, the number of infection-fighting white blood cells in your body can go down. At the same time, your stress hormone cortisol may go up, which may interfere with the ability of certain immune cells to work right.

When Should You Call the Doctor About Exercise and Colds?

If you exercise with a cold, call your doctor if you notice:

- Your chest is more congested.
- You cough and wheeze.

Stop your activity and get emergency medical help if you:

- Feel chest tightness or pressure
- Have trouble breathing or get very short of breath
- Get lightheaded or dizzy
- Have problems with balance

https://fepblue.webmdhealth.com/newsletters?id=ACIyQ5n5oQhs_e0HVV7YuiHJ5f3S6lvkUwDL7FqplMhxw0&s=14148&mrid=37b17510-44ce-e711-8b14-a0369f37142e

A Time to Think

Three of the questions in the *Senior Leadership item* in the Baldrige Excellence Builder are: 1. How do senior leaders set your organization's vision?; 2. How do senior leaders create a focus on action that will achieve the organization's mission?; and 3. How do senior leaders create an environment for success now and in the future? The last question includes considerations of organizational and personal learning and innovation.



they conclude that a leader needs to schedule unstructured thinking time. Yana Kakar, Global Managing Partner of Dalberg reserves 3 two-hour blocks of time each week for reflective thinking. She states, "Thinking is the only thing you can't outsource as a leader."

Scott Eblin in a recent Government Executive blog(link is external) states that there are five steps to creating time for reflective thinking:

1. Commit to a topic
2. Block some time
3. Go somewhere else
4. Immerse yourself
5. Take notes to document your thoughts and add to them as ideas occur

I do not believe any leader can do justice to these important questions without devoting time to reflection, contemplative thinking, and challenging basic organizational and personal assumptions. The time many leaders spend in reactive thinking, firefighting, and solving problems does not substitute for reflection and "future" thought. Frequently fires and problems can and should be delegated to those with direct responsibility. And frequently, those issues become an excuse for having no time for the more important strategic thinking.

It is well known among Baldrige Performance Excellence Program staff that as Director I used my grass mowing time each week (a four-hour riding mower experience) as my time to reflect and do "future-thinking." There was a running joke where I would be asked on Monday mornings if I had mowed over the weekend and then people would wait for my new ideas, hair-brained or otherwise. The first thoughts about a Baldrige Executive Fellows Program was a result of mowing and contemplating how we could attract senior leaders who don't know about Baldrige to the opportunities the Baldrige Framework and community can offer their organization's journey to excellence. The idea started with blowing up the boundary condition that our education mission was restricted to training examiners and sharing best practices through writing and conferences.

According to Reeves, Torres, and Hassan in a recent HBR blog (link is external), Albert Einstein came up with his theory of relativity while riding his bicycle and Warren Buffett reads for six hours a day to inform himself. They state that, "reflective thinking (slow and deliberate) and reactive thinking (fast and instinctual) effectively exist at opposite ends of a switch." Only one process can be on at any given time. As with others who have written on the topic,

Here is my approach to reflective thinking that has helped me over the years:

1. Define the problem or opportunity you want to explore
2. Ask 5 why's(link is external) to make sure you are addressing the problem or opportunity at its root.
3. Define existing boundary conditions that might be limiting or defining current approaches or that might be framing your current thinking
4. Blow up those boundary conditions and consider new approaches; think outside the domain of current norms, industry sector, customers....
5. Accumulate random ideas
6. Sort and prioritize, if appropriate/needed
7. Let it rest for a day
8. Revisit the ideas with "refreshed eyes"
9. Share the idea and let colleagues build on it

Do you make time for reflective thinking? How do you avoid distractions? What is your process for reflective thinking?

Taken from the Official Baldrige blog,
<https://www.nist.gov/blogs/blogrige/time-think>
By: Harry Hertz "The Baldrige Cheermudgeon"

HOW TO MAXIMIZE THE SEVEN LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP

Leaders rise or fall at points of execution and completion.

7 levels of leadership:

#1. Believe you can make a difference.

Roots of belief:

1. Someone saw something in you that inspired you to believe in yourself.
2. Small successes helped you believe you could take on bigger challenges. Belief grows *after* taking action.
3. Failure and falling short lose their ability to hobble.

#2. Passion for excellence.

1. Dedicate yourself to personal leadership development.
2. Realize pursuit isn't attainment. Today's achievement is tomorrow's starting point.
3. Acknowledge that you have a narrow band where excellence is easy. Everything else is hard work.

#3. Dedication to learning.

Master methods of management and personal strategies for leadership.

Tip: Pour your energy into those who are dedicated to pursuing excellence (#2).

#4. Commitment to execution and completion through people.

The practice of leadership is about getting things done through others. Practice requires self-control and self-awareness.

1. Self-control is the urgent need to get things

done – combined with the ability to ignore distraction.

2. Self-awareness is recognition of the impact your behaviors and attitudes have on others.

#5. Humility.

There comes a point when humility is more than a good idea. The higher you go in organizational life, the more you rely on others.

Arrogant leaders manipulate, meddle, and over-manage. Humble leaders enable, empower, release, and practice mutual accountability.

#6. Kindness.

1. Kindness flows from humility (#5).
2. Kindness lets

others know it's safe to follow you.

#7. Passion to serve the best interest of others.

One reason leaders become jerks is they haven't humbly worked through difficulty and adversity. Disruption, adversity, and disappointment are all connected to commitment to execution and completion (#4).

The fire of adversity (#4) is an essential opportunity to develop humility. Lack of humility (#5) accounts for unkind (#6), self-serving leaders (#7).

The last three levels of leadership – humility, kindness, and selfless service – emerge when leaders successfully wrestle with execution and completion (#4).

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2017/11/14/how-to-maximize-the-seven-levels-of-leadership/>





The Houston FEB has partnered with IRS Stakeholder Partnerships, Education and Communication (SPEC) to make "MyFreeTaxes" available for federal employees and their families in Houston who made less than \$66,000 in 2017 (individual or family). We also wish to extend this opportunity to contractors who work in federal space and all family members (yep, even extended family).

The MyFreeTaxes Partnership provides no-cost state and federal tax preparation and filing assistance for qualified individuals. It's easy, safe, secure and 100% free.

If an employee is asked for payment information to prepare their federal or state tax return and their income is \$66,000 or less STOP and call 855-698-9435.

Using the FEB link, a filer will be able to:

Use free tax preparation and e-filing of their federal and state return. Also have access to assistance; if they have questions, they can call a certified tax coach using the toll free number or email address provided. If unable to contact the certified tax coach immediately, they can leave a message and the call will be returned within 24 hours. Obtain knowledge and understanding about filing their return and build confidence to file without assistance in the future.

Additional information is provided on the FEB website:

www.oklahoma.feb.gov/MyFreeTaxesAddtlInfo.htm

Earned Income Tax Credit: Through this site, they can also file, claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit, if eligible due to adjusted gross income limits. They can use the EITC Assistant and answer questions about them and other family members to see if they qualify and estimate the amount of their credit. EITC eligibility depends on several factors, including income and family size.

If you have family members that live in other states, they can still utilize this resource! As long as they meet the income criteria, once they put in their address, it will calculate utilizing their State of residence's filing requirements.

SEVEN WAYS TO BE THANKFUL LIKE A LEADER

Gratitude dies when you think it but don't say it.

Problems and pressure suck gratitude out of your soul. But the practice of aspirational gratitude elevates you and energizes the people around you.

Fear-filled organizations have forgotten the practice of gratitude.

Seven ways to be thankful like a leader:

Think of gratitude as pouring energy into others.

#1. Make a list of 5 people and find one expression of gratitude for each one. (Do this in the parking lot before you enter the shop or office.)

If you find it challenging to express gratitude, practice in the car before walking into the office or shop.

#2. Let gratitude be the first thing out of your mouth. Begin conversations and meetings with, "I'm thankful for ..."

#3. Ask team leaders, "What praiseworthy qualities do you see in the people on your team?"

#4. Don't wait for exceptional results to say thank you. Where would you be if everyone stopped doing the every-day-good-job they do everyday?

Negativity dominates organizations when gratitude is reserved for exceptional results.

#5. Pause, look someone in the eye, and smile, when saying thank you. (If smiling is too much for you, try curving the corners of your mouth just a little.)

#6. Add skin.

Pat someone on the back. Shake hands. If you're adventurous, pat their hand when you shake it.

#7. Walk out of work expressing gratitude.

Let gratitude be the last thing out of your mouth at the

end of the day.

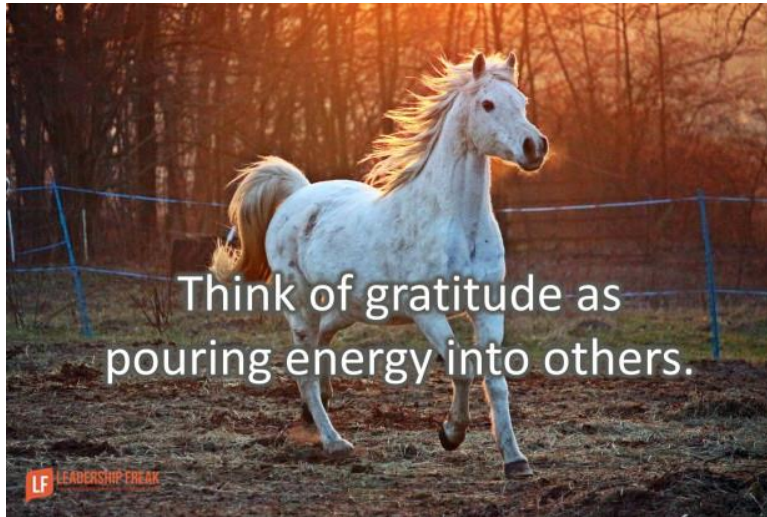
Gratitude tips:

Get specific. Stop using "good job" as your expression of gratitude. Notice character, skills, behaviors, energy, attitudes, and progress, not just results.

When you reserve gratitude for endings, people feel they've arrived. Notice the work that produces endings if you want to energize work.

Bonus benefit:

Gratitude opens hearts and enables commitments.



<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2017/11/28/seven-ways-to-be-thankful-like-a-leader/>

Three Basic Truths About People That Busy Leaders Should Not Ignore



Lately, I've been working with a company that's about to make a big leap. They have a potentially world-changing product and are on the cusp of scaling up in a big way. It's very exciting stuff.

Everyone from the CEO on down is super busy. There is a lot of work to do both internally and externally. With all the demands, time and attention are scarce.

That's true for many of the leaders I work with. It can be really exciting when you're running at a hundred miles per hour to get big things done. The challenge is that, in that kind of situation, it's easy to lose sight of some basic truths about people that you just intuitively get when you're not so absorbed by everything else you have to do.

Here, then, are three basic truths about people that busy leaders should not ignore:

People care about where you are and what you're doing. When you're running hard, you're likely to be in a lot of meetings and, possibly, on a lot of airplanes. You're getting stuff done but it can feel to your team like you're missing in action. Keep doing what you need to do but let them know what you're doing and why you're doing it. Set the context and tell the story. Nature abhors a vacuum. In the absence of solid information, people make stuff up. That's hardly ever helpful. Avoid that by letting your people know where you are, what you're doing and why you're doing it.

People want predictability. To do their best work, most people need some amount of

predictability. They need to know what's expected of them, what others are working on and how it all hangs together. This is especially true for leadership teams. They need an operating rhythm that ensures that they can stay well informed and in sync with each other. That requires regular and consistent communications. It can be hard to stick with the rhythm of that when you're running flat out, but it needs to be a priority. Without the predictability of that kind of communication, your team will likely lose their way.

Don't ask, "Are there any questions?" because people rarely speak up. How many times have you been in a town hall meeting (or, worse, leading one) when, after all the presentations, someone asks, "Are there any questions?" and the response is crickets. That's because most people are never going to step up and ask the first question in front of a room. Again, that's especially true when there is a lot going on and a lot of change. If you really want to know what people think (and you should), don't ask, "Are there any questions?" Instead, ask "What are we missing?" or "What's going on that we need to pay more attention to?" If you really want to grease the skids, pose one of those questions and then give people ten minutes to talk about it in small groups and then ask for some spokespeople from each group. You'll almost certainly get better information that way.

So, be busy and get big stuff done. Just don't ignore the basic truths about what people need while you're doing it. Your team will be a lot more engaged and productive if you tend to what they need.



Taken from

<http://www.govexec.com/excellence/executive-coach/2017/10/three-basic-truths-about-people-busy-leaders-should-not-ignore/142141/?oref=recentposts>

Written by Executive coach, Scott Eblin. A former government executive, Scott is a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and is the author of *The Next Level: What Insiders Know About Executive Success*.



Our Driving Concern Train-the Trainer



Date:	Wednesday, April 17, 2018
Time:	8:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.
Location:	8701 S. Gessner, 12 th Floor conference room, Houston
Why?	Traffic crashes exact a heavy toll on their victims and on businesses. According to the National Safety Council, vehicle collisions are the top cause of work-related death in Texas. Injuries result in costly lost-time workers' compensation claims, and fatalities leave businesses exposed to liability and the possibility of paying multi-million dollar settlements.
Topics:	Our Driving Concern provides your managers, HR professionals and safety instructors with the resources you need to address distracted driving, drowsy driving, aggressive driving, passenger restraint, impaired driving, and other traffic safety topics in your workplace. Our Driving Concern also offers tools and resources to help you build a company-wide traffic safety program.
Who Should Attend?	Managers, HR professionals and safety professionals and/or instructors who are willing to return to your agency and teach the "Our Driving Concern" Curriculum, in-house, multiplying the effort and benefit!
Cost:	Thanks to a grant from TxDOT, this 4-hour course is provided free of charge

For CEU credit, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/CEUcreditarlington>

In Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes, the Highway Safety Office says the real tragedy is crashes are largely preventable. Recognizing the opportunity that employers have to save lives, a growing number of employers have established traffic safety programs in their companies. No organization can afford to ignore a major problem that has such a serious impact on both their personnel and the agency budget.

Registration

Name _____ Agency _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Position Title: _____

Mail registration to:	Federal Executive Board 2320 La Branch Street, Rm 1107 Houston, TX 77004
Email to:	Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, cancellations will be permitted through April 10, 2018. Since this is a "no-cost" training, we ask your courtesy to cancel early so that we can accommodate people on the waiting list, if one exists.